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# ENG 5011-001: The Practice and Politics of Evaluating Student Writing

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## English 5011 –The Practice and Politics of Evaluating Student Writing

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Office hours: Monday 10-12; Tuesday 10-12 and 6-7 pm; Wednesday 9:30-11

### Objectives and Overview

For most writing teachers, evaluating students' writing takes the majority of the time we spend on our courses and represents a significant amount of the one-on-one communication we have with our students. Despite the amount of time spent grading, teachers often don't take time to critically analyze their approaches to evaluation or to plan an effective method for handling a stack of papers. This course will examine evaluation broadly, from establishing evaluation criteria for assignments to giving feedback on drafts to assigning a final grade on the paper.

Specific objectives for this course:

- Demonstrate in-depth understanding of the literature on evaluating student writing
- Recognize and apply effective methods of evaluation that support student learning and align with course objectives, assignment objectives, and classroom content
- Implement strategies for maintaining effectiveness of evaluation while improving efficiency
- Engage effectively with composition research and theory
- Write professional, clear academic prose that engages effectively with source material while presenting original ideas

### Texts for this Class

- *Key Works in Teacher Response: An Anthology*, Richard Straub
- *Evaluating Writing: The Role of Teachers' Knowledge about Text, Learning, and Culture*, Charles Cooper and Lee Odell
- Articles on D2L

### Assignments

*Eight Article Responses/Informed evaluations (30% of semester grade):*

Five to six times during the semester, you will select an important issue from the readings and briefly summarize how that issue is discussed in the articles you have read for that week. You will then write an analysis by doing one or more of the following:

- Take a position in support of or opposition to the arguments presented in the articles
- Compare/contrast the relative strengths and weaknesses among the three articles' presentations of that issue (i.e., which is more credible, reliable, persuasive on this issue?)
- Discuss the issue in terms of concepts or articles from earlier in the course
- Apply the issue to your own experiences evaluating or being evaluated

Article responses will be evaluated on evidence of accuracy of reading, depth of engagement with the articles, critical thinking, and clarity of prose. Length is not a focus of the evaluation.

Two to three times during the semester, you will use the assigned readings to inform your evaluation of a sample student paper. You will submit the fully evaluated paper along with an analysis explaining how your evaluation was shaped by the week's readings. Informed evaluations will be evaluated on attention to the evaluation of the paper, depth of engagement with the articles, critical thinking, and clarity of prose. Length is not a focus of the evaluation.

Note: There are 11 dates (between weeks 2–12) on the syllabus with the assignment indicator “article response or informed evaluation.” You may choose the 8 responses/evaluations you will write from this list of dates. If you choose to write more than 8 responses or evaluations, you may drop the lowest scores at the end of the semester.

*Evaluation Rubrics (15% of semester grade):*

You will design and apply rubrics for two assignments. Along with the rubrics, you will provide a written rationale for the decisions you have made. The rubrics and rationale will be evaluated on grounding in literature about evaluation, connection between the assignment sheet and rubric, usability of the rubric, appropriateness for the target student population, and clarity and correctness of prose.

*Evaluation Philosophy and Plan (20% of semester grade):*

You will develop your evaluation philosophy (your beliefs about what makes effective evaluation) and plan (how you will approach evaluation on a practical level), which will be evaluated on its grounding in the literature about evaluation, self-reflection, and clarity of prose.

*Major Paper/Project (30% of semester grade):*

You will create a seminar project on some aspect of evaluation of interest to you. The project can be based in research of secondary sources, interviews with teachers or students, analysis of evaluated papers, etc. The topic and scope are at your discretion; you will, however, submit an informal 2–5 page proposal midway through the semester. Specific evaluation criteria for the major paper and project will be provided after the proposal stage.

*Quality of failure (5% of semester grade):*

The knowledge of every discipline is based on a process that includes regular failure, reflection on that failure, and then adjustment made accordingly. Unfortunately, the nature of our educational system often makes the risk of failure seem too high for students; as a result, students may not develop risk-taking habits in their education and, subsequently, their careers. For most of you, this class introduces you to a body of literature you have not previously encountered, a situation ripe with opportunities to fail. I encourage you to make high-quality mistakes: try out a new idea or approach in a reading response, share a partially formed idea, wallow in ambiguity, change your mind. And when you do, I will reward you for that in the currency of the university: your grade. At the end of the semester, I will ask you to submit a memo to me detailing the ways in which you embraced failure and ambiguity this semester. (Want to learn more about “teaching to fail”? Check out this essay: <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2012/08/21/essay-importance-teaching-failure>)

### **Attendance, Engagement, and Late Work**

Prompt, regular attendance, as well as active, informed engagement in class discussion and activities, is expected. Students who do not attend regularly or who do not participate in class discussions and activities can expect their final grade to be lowered.

As part of this class, you will have the opportunity to evaluate sample papers. A LOT of sample papers. Failure to evaluate the assigned papers would result in a reduction of your semester grade, but the evaluations themselves will not be graded; instead you will receive feedback on your evaluative approaches.

Late assignments will be docked 5% each day until they are turned in. The evaluation rubrics, evaluation plan and philosophy, and the major project must be turned in to pass the course.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

### **Plagiarism / Academic Integrity**

Since this is a class on evaluating student writing, we'll have opportunities to discuss how you might handle student work that has been plagiarized or that you suspect might have been plagiarized. It should go without saying (but unfortunately, these things usually don't) that we will model the behaviors of academic integrity that we would expect from our students.

To that end, plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. The English Department states, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism -- 'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

## ENG 5011 – Contact List

Name	Preferred Email and Phone

## ENG 5011: Assigned Work

Work should be completed by the start of class time on the date indicated.

C/O = Cooper and Odell, *Evaluating Writing*

S = Straub, *Key Works on Teacher Response*

~~E = E-reserves for ENG 5011 (password tf5011)~~

Jan 14 Wk 2	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Odell, "Assessing Thinking: Glimpsing a Mind at Work" (C/O)</li> <li>• Shadiow, "The Legacy of Teacher Comments" (PDF)</li> <li>• Sommers, N., "Responding to Student Writing" (S)</li> <li>• Sommers, N., "Re-visions: Rethinking Nancy Sommers's 'Responding to Student Writing,' 1982" (PDF)</li> </ul> <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response or informed evaluation</p> <p>BRING:</p> <p>Course materials binder</p> <p>Assignment sheets you've created in the past</p>
Jan 28 Wk 3	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Horvarth, Components of Written Response: A Practical Synthesis of Current Views" (PDF)</li> <li>• Smith, "Genre of the End Comment: Conventions in Teacher Response to Student Writing" (PDF)</li> <li>• Auten, "A Rhetoric of Teacher Commentary: The Complexity of Response to Student Writing" (PDF)</li> <li>• Connors &amp; Lunsford, "Teachers' Rhetorical Comments on Student Papers" (S)</li> </ul> <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response or informed evaluation or informed evaluation</p>
Feb 04 Wk 4	<p>READ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ransdell, "Directive versus Facilitative Commentary" (PDF)</li> <li>• Kogel-Gedeon, "All I Did Was Ask: Communicating with Students about Their Writing" (PDF)</li> <li>• Hillocks, "The Interaction of Instruction, Teacher Comment, and Revision in Teaching the Composing Process" (S)</li> </ul> <p>WRITE:</p> <p>Article response or informed evaluation</p>